

# NACHIKETA

*and other tales from  
the Upanishads*

AMAR  
CHITRA  
KATHA



APPROVED  
BY THE  
COMICS  
CODE



AUTHORITY

The three stories depicted here are from the Upanishads. The Upanishads are also called Vedanta or "the end of the Veda" because they form the last branch of Vedic literature and because one finds in them the final aim of the Vedas—that of self-realisation.

The word Upanishad literally means "to sit down by someone". This throws light on the system of education prevalent in ancient India. When a pupil approached a guru to seek instruction from him, the guru would decide what to teach after assessing his receptivity. Thus, in the first story, Yama tests Nachiketa before giving him further instruction.

In the Vedic period, learning was achieved by direct experience rather than by verbal instruction. Nature was the teacher, as we find in the story of Satyakama. Even when verbal instruction was imparted, it was kept to the barest minimum. Prajapati, in our third story, utters, as instruction a single syllable—"DA". Obviously, the teachers of the Vedic age did not believe in long discourses! And what the teacher said was understood and interpreted differently by each pupil in the light of his own experience.

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# NACHIKETA



THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, THERE LIVED A SAGE CALLED VAJASHRAVA. HE HAD A SON NAMED NACHIKETA.

LITTLE NACHIKETA USED TO WATCH HIS FATHER PERFORM YAJNAS.\*



ONE DAY WHEN NACHIKETA WAS ABOUT EIGHT YEARS OLD —

FATHER, WHEN WILL YOU LET ME WORSHIP THE SACRED FIRE?

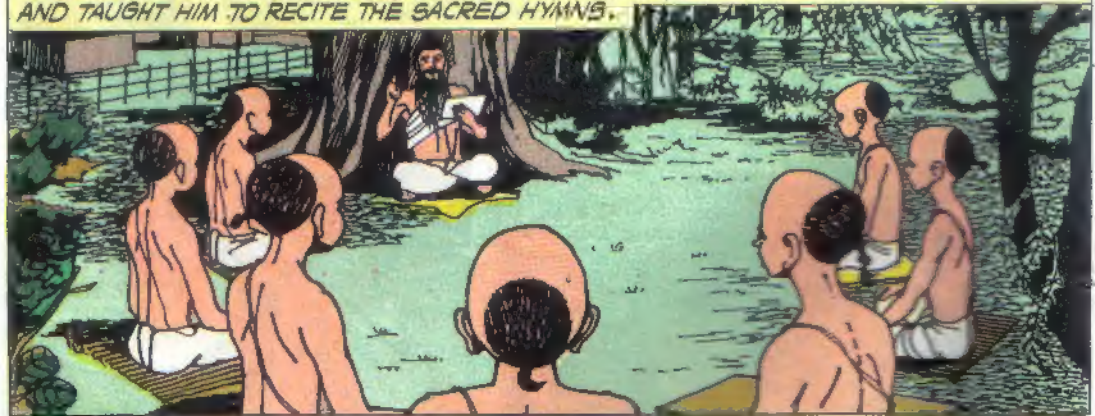
SOON AFTER YOUR INITIATION, SON.

\*FIRE SACRIFICE





NACHIKETA WENT TO A GURUKULA, A FOREST-SCHOOL, WHERE HIS GURU INITIATED HIM AND TAUGHT HIM TO RECITE THE SACRED HYMNS.





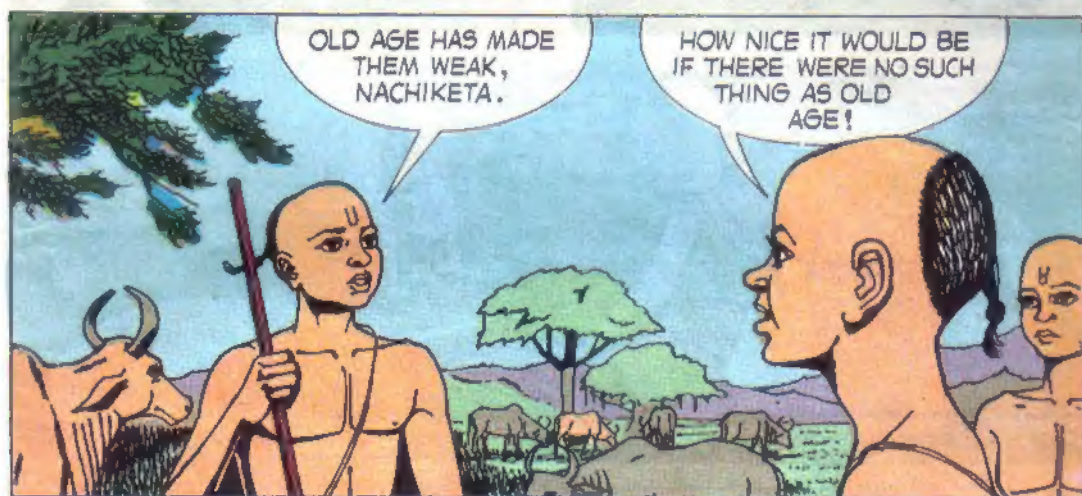
NACHIKETA AND ANOTHER BOY WERE ASSIGNED THE TASK OF LOOKING AFTER THE CATTLE.

BUT WHY AREN'T THESE COWS GRAZING? THEY LOOK TIRED AND UNHAPPY.



OLD AGE HAS MADE THEM WEAK, NACHIKETA.

HOW NICE IT WOULD BE IF THERE WERE NO SUCH THING AS OLD AGE!



THERE IS NO OLD AGE OR SICKNESS IN HEAVEN.

THEN, TELL ME, HOW DOES ONE REACH HEAVEN?



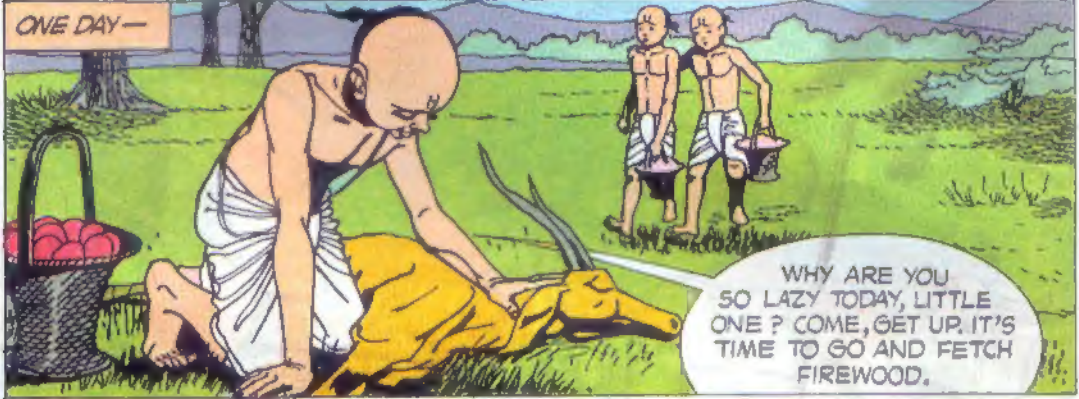
THE FRIEND, OF COURSE, HAD NO ANSWER.



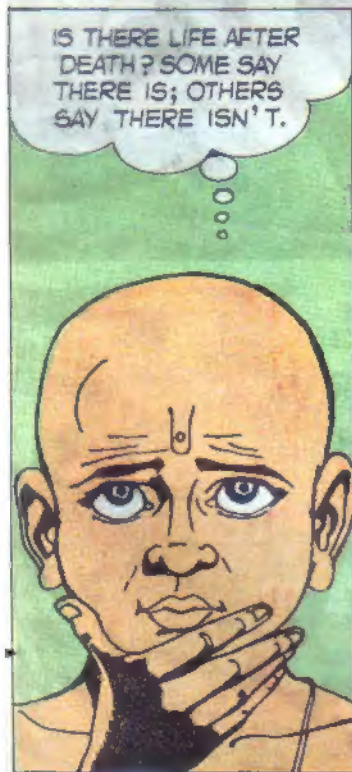
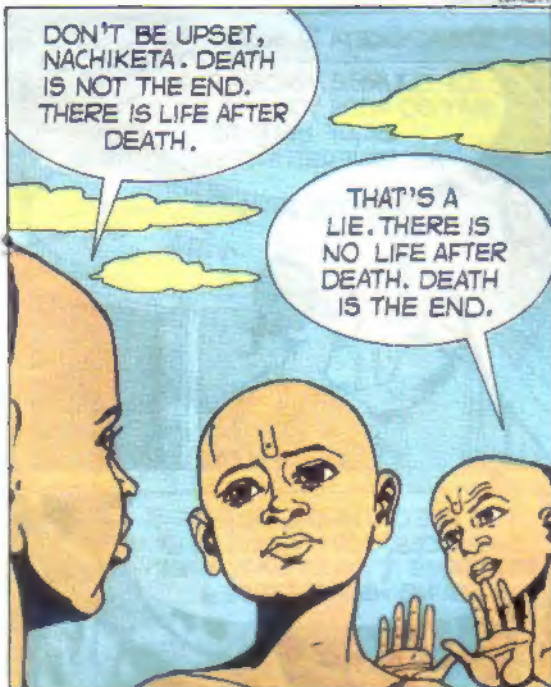
A DEER HAD GROWN QUITE FOND OF NACHIKETA AND USED TO FOLLOW HIM WHENEVER HE WENT OUT TO GATHER FIREWOOD.



ONE DAY —







FINALLY, HE TURNED TO HIS GURU FOR AN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION THAT WAS TROUBLING HIM.

IT IS A DIFFICULT QUESTION, MY SON. EACH ONE MUST DISCOVER THE TRUTH FOR HIMSELF.



HOW CAN I FIND AN ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION? THERE MUST BE A WAY!





SOME TIME LATER, VAJASHRAVA SENT A MESSAGE TO NACHIKETA'S GURU.

SAGE VAJASHRAVA IS GOING TO PERFORM THE VISHVAJIT SACRIFICE. PLEASE ALLOW NACHIKETA TO GO HOME.

OF COURSE, NACHIKETA MAY GO WITH YOU. HE WILL BE OF HELP TO HIS REVERED FATHER.

THANK YOU, SIR.

ON THE WAY HOME —

WHAT IS THE VISHVAJIT SACRIFICE?

IT IS ONE OF THE GREATEST OF SACRIFICES, FOR THE ONE WHO PERFORMS IT, GIVES AWAY EVERYTHING HE POSSESSES.

LOOK! ALL THOSE BRAHMANNS ARE HEADING FOR OUR HERMITAGE TO RECEIVE YOUR FATHER'S GIFTS.



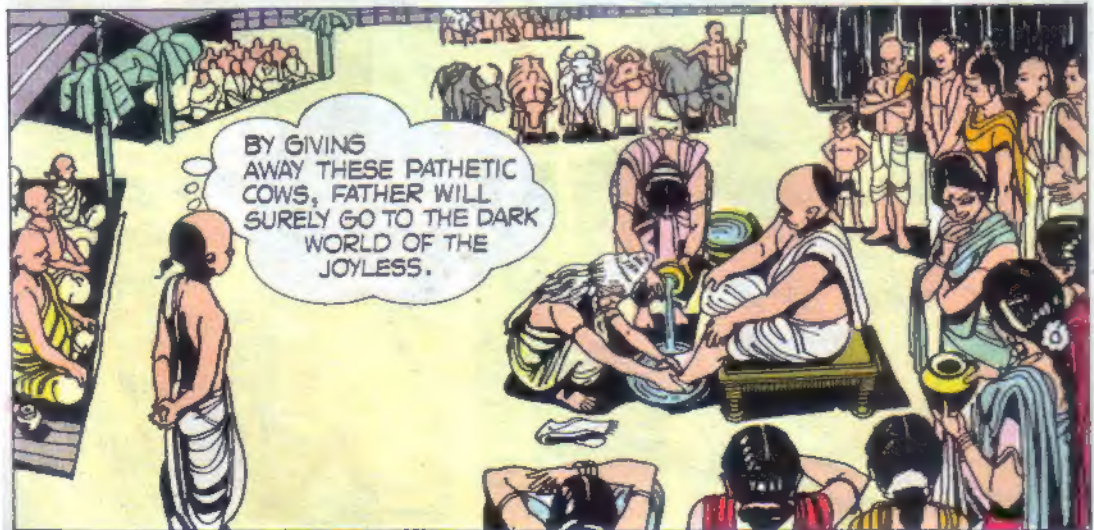
WHEN NACHIKETA REACHED HOME —

YOU ARE JUST IN TIME, MY SON. HELP MY DISCIPLES BRING IN THE COWS.

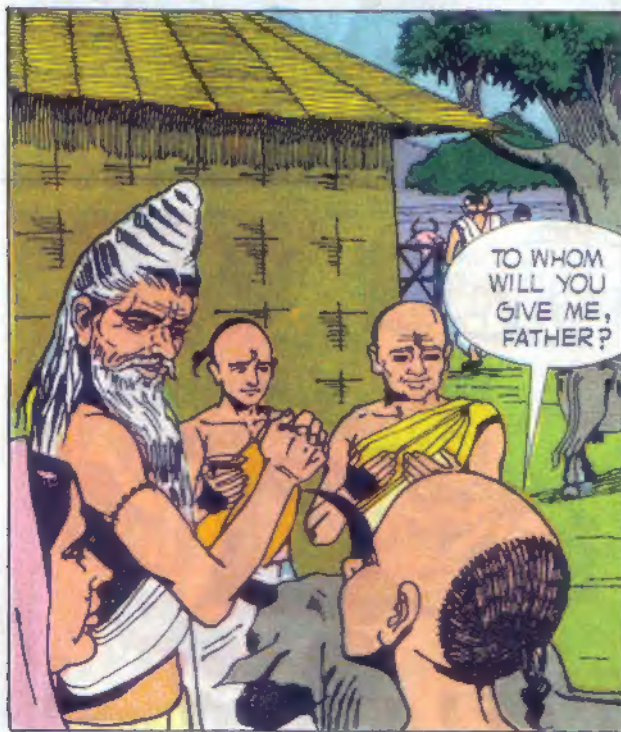
YES, FATHER.



BY GIVING AWAY THESE PATHETIC COWS, FATHER WILL SURELY GO TO THE DARK WORLD OF THE JOYLESS.









NACHIKETA ASKED THE SAME QUESTION AGAIN.



RECEIVING NO ANSWER, NACHIKETA REPEATED HIS QUESTION FOR THE THIRD TIME.

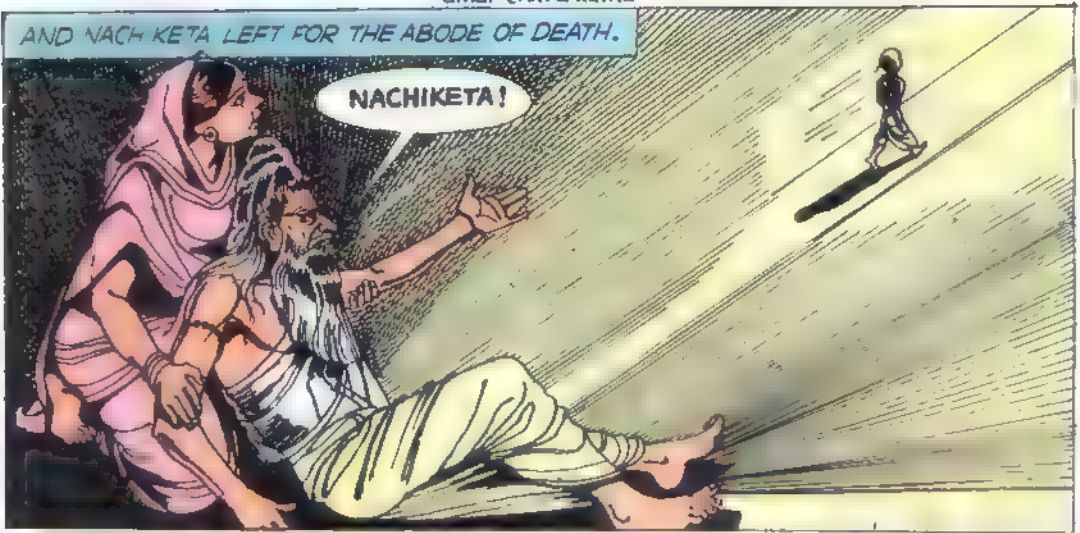


THE SAGE REGRETTED HIS ANGRY WORDS IMMEDIATELY.



AND NACH KETA LEFT FOR THE ABODE OF DEATH.

NACHIKETA!



ON ARRIVING AT YAMA'S ABODE, NACHIKETA WAITED OUTSIDE FOR THREE DAYS WITHOUT FOOD.

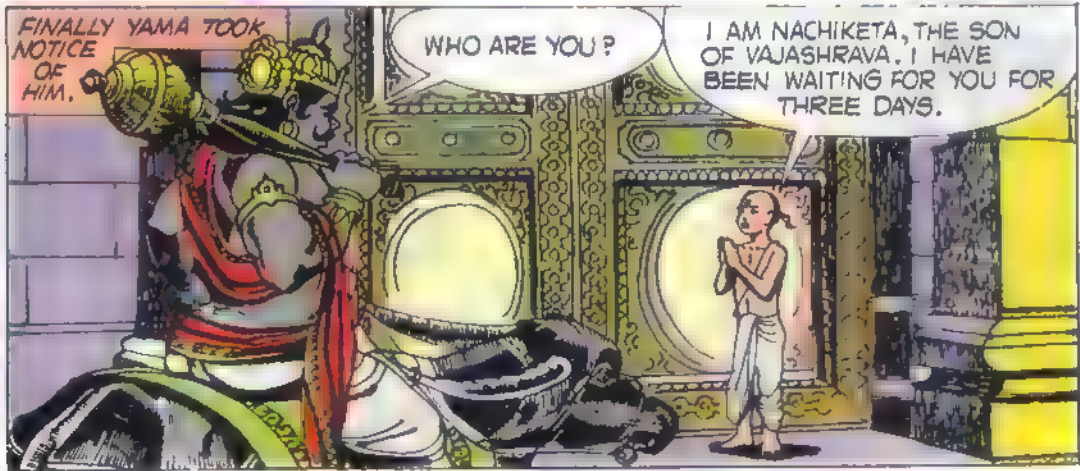
I WILL WAIT TILL YAMA COMES.



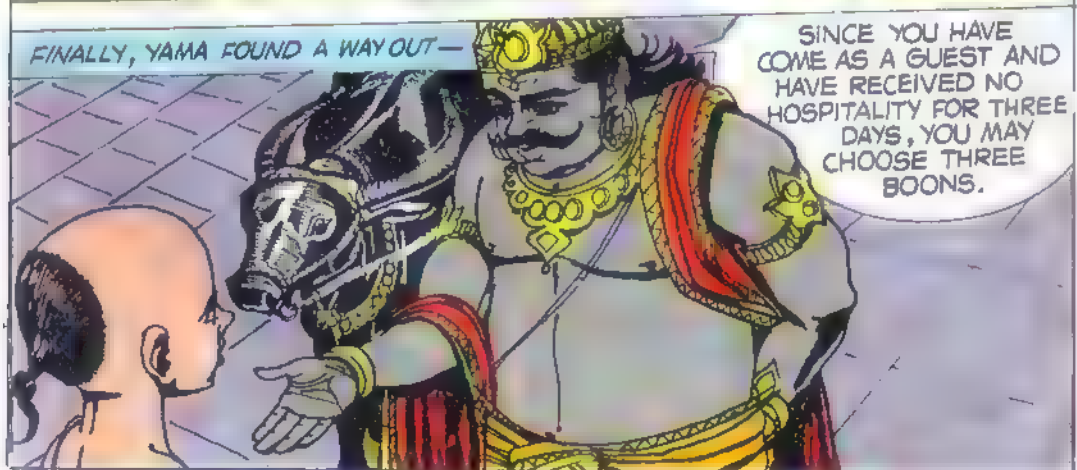
FINALLY YAMA TOOK NOTICE OF HIM.

WHO ARE YOU ?

I AM NACHIKETA, THE SON OF VAJASHRAVA. I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU FOR THREE DAYS.

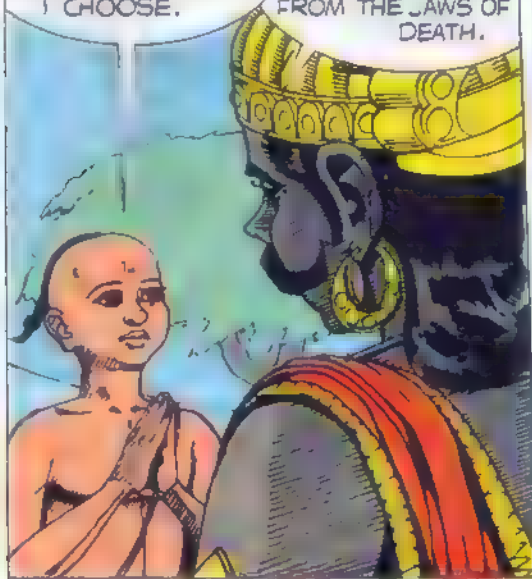






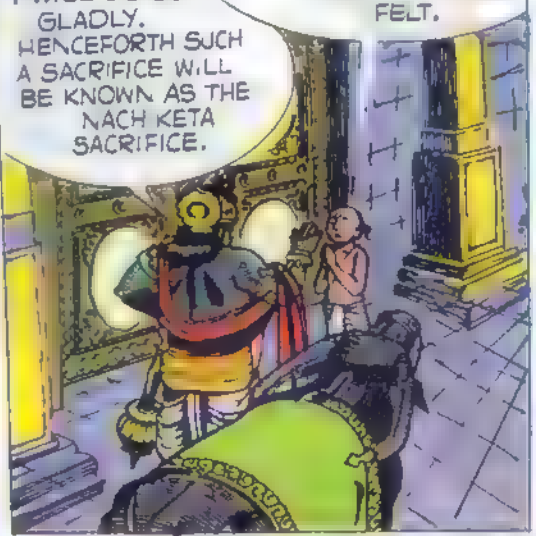
GRANT MY FATHER  
PEACE OF MIND  
AND MAKE HIM  
CHEERFUL. THIS IS  
THE FIRST BOON  
I CHOOSE.

HE SHALL HAVE  
IT. HE WILL GREET  
YOU CHEERFULLY  
WHEN HE SEES  
YOU RELEASED  
FROM THE JAWS OF  
DEATH.



IN HEAVEN THERE IS NO  
HUNGER, THIRST, OLD  
AGE OR DEATH. TEACH ME  
THE SACRIFICE BY THE  
PERFORMANCE OF WHICH  
NO HUNGER AND  
THIRST WILL BE  
FELT.

I WILL DO SO  
GLADLY.  
HENCEFORTH SUCH  
A SACRIFICE WILL  
BE KNOWN AS THE  
NACH KETA  
SACRIFICE.



SOME PEOPLE  
BELIEVE THAT THERE  
IS LIFE AFTER DEATH;  
OTHERS DON'T. TELL  
ME WHO IS RIGHT.  
THIS IS THE THIRD  
BOON I CHOOSE.

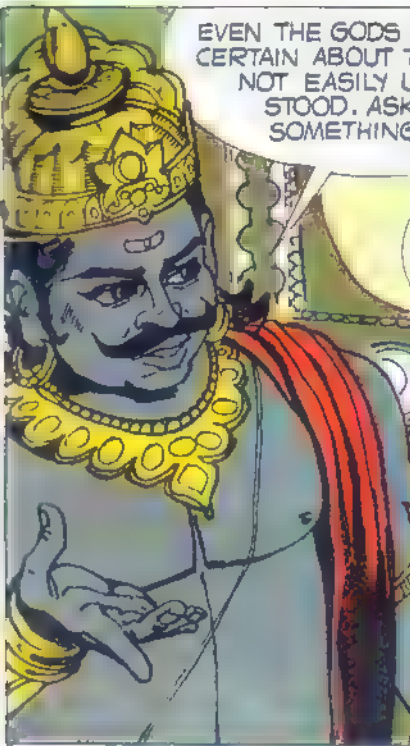


YAMA BECAME THOUGHTFUL.

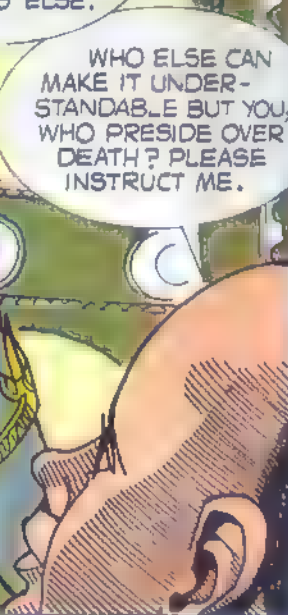
I HAD NOT EXPECTED SUCH A  
QUESTION FROM SO YOUNG A  
BOY. LET ME TEST HIM.



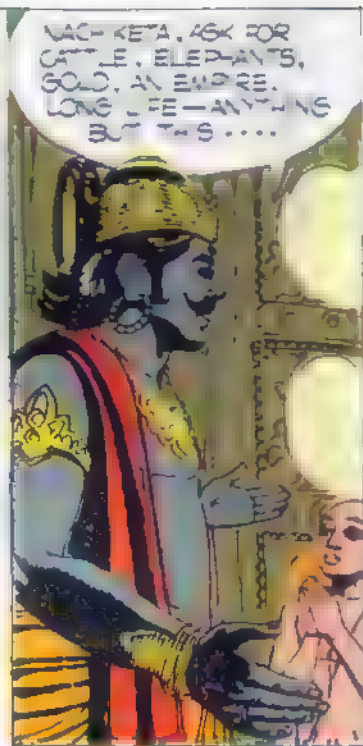




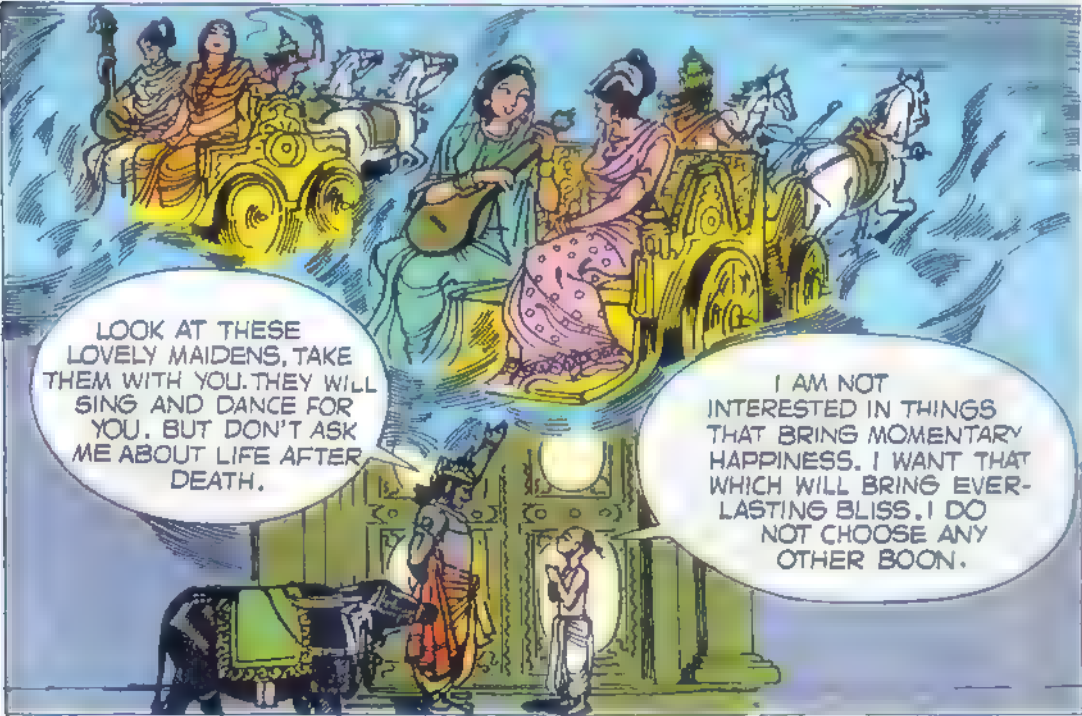
EVEN THE GODS ARE NOT CERTAIN ABOUT THIS. IT IS NOT EASILY UNDERSTOOD. ASK FOR SOMETHING ELSE.



WHO ELSE CAN MAKE IT UNDERSTANDABLE BUT YOU, WHO PRESIDE OVER DEATH? PLEASE INSTRUCT ME.



NACHIKETA, ASK FOR CATTLE, ELEPHANTS, GOLD, AN EMPIRE, LONG LIFE—ANYTHING BUT THIS....



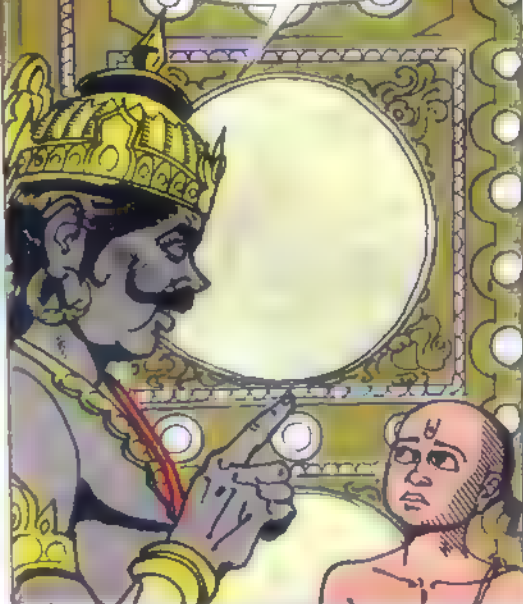
LOOK AT THESE LOVELY MAIDENS, TAKE THEM WITH YOU. THEY WILL SING AND DANCE FOR YOU. BUT DON'T ASK ME ABOUT LIFE AFTER DEATH.

I AM NOT INTERESTED IN THINGS THAT BRING MOMENTARY HAPPINESS. I WANT THAT WHICH WILL BRING EVERLASTING BLISS. I DO NOT CHOOSE ANY OTHER BOON.

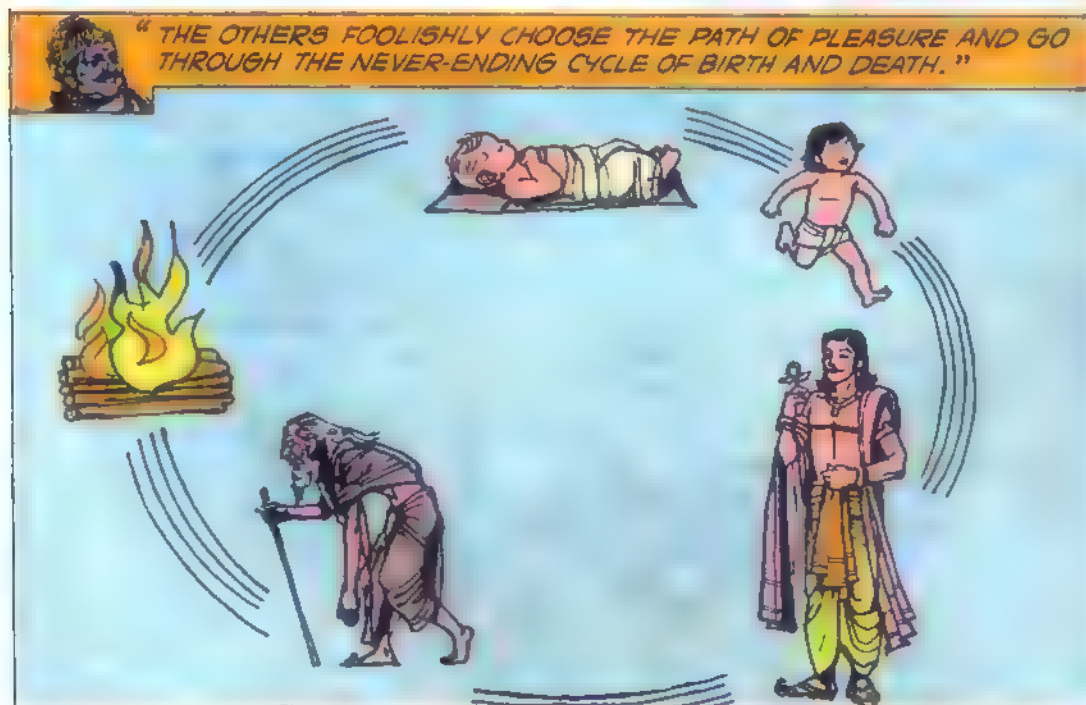
THIS BOY HAS  
STEADFAST FAITH AND  
IS FREE FROM TEMPTA-  
TION. SINCE HE IS SO  
WORTHY, I WILL  
INSTRUCT HIM  
FURTHER.



NACHIKETA, TWO PATHS ARE  
OPEN TO MEN. THE WISE  
TAKE THE GOOD PATH  
AND REALISE THE  
SELF.



"THE OTHERS FOOLISHLY CHOOSE THE PATH OF PLEASURE AND GO  
THROUGH THE NEVER-ENDING CYCLE OF BIRTH AND DEATH."





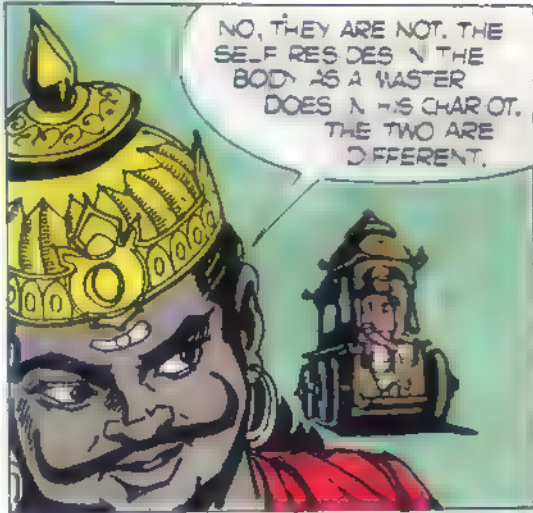
YAMA PROCEEDED TO TEACH NACHIKETA THE NATURE OF THE SELF.

WHEN A MAN IS DEAD,  
IT IS THE BODY THAT  
PERISHES, NOT  
THE SELF.

BUT  
AREN'T  
THEY THE  
SAME?

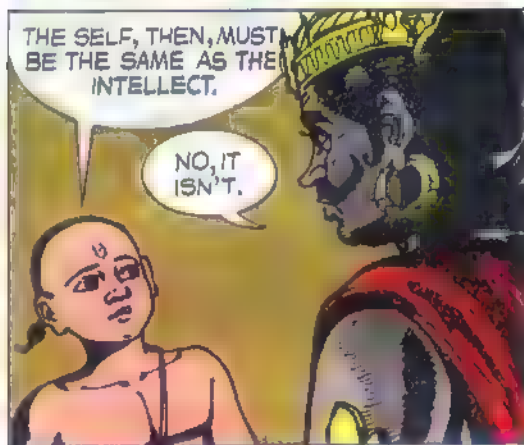


NO, THEY ARE NOT. THE  
SELF RESIDES IN THE  
BODY AS A MASTER  
DOES IN HIS CHARIOT.  
THE TWO ARE  
DIFFERENT.

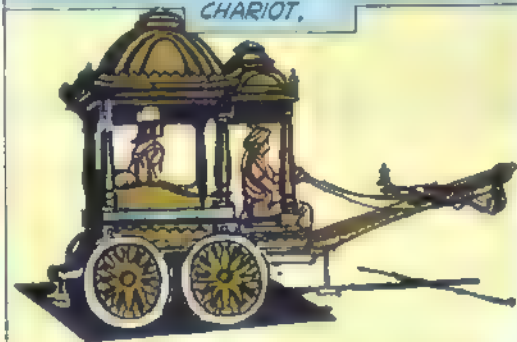


THE SELF, THEN, MUST  
BE THE SAME AS THE  
INTELLECT.

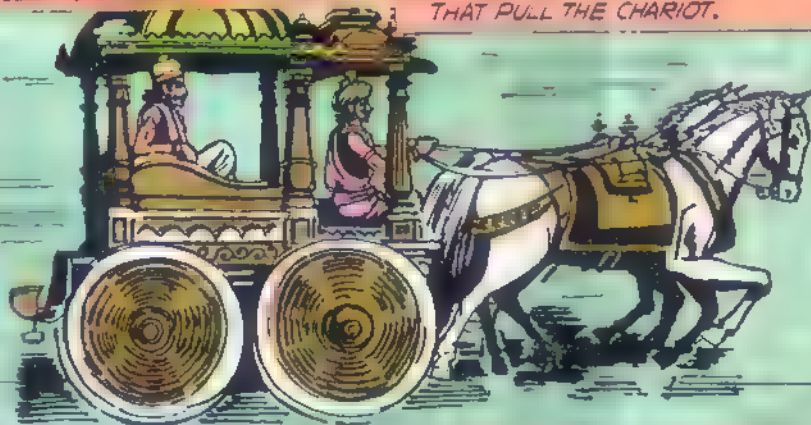
NO, IT  
ISN'T.



THE INTELLECT IS TO THE SELF WHAT THE  
DRIVER IS TO THE MASTER OF THE  
CHARIOT.



THE SELF IS DIFFERENT FROM THE SENSE ORGANS, TOO, WHICH ARE LIKE THE HORSES  
THAT PULL THE CHARIOT.



"MEN ARE PULLED IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS BY THE SENSE ORGANS.

"BY THE EYE —



"BY THE EAR —



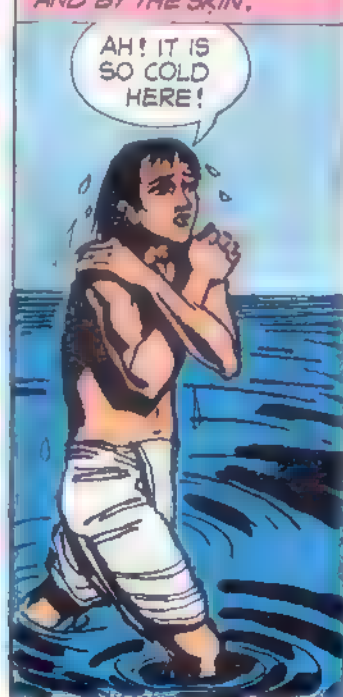
"BY THE NOSE —



"BY THE TONGUE —



"AND BY THE SKIN.





"JUST AS THE HORSES ARE HELD IN CHECK BY THE REINS...



"...SO ALSO THE SENSE ORGANS ARE HELD IN CHECK BY THE MIND.

NO, I WON'T LOOK THAT WAY. LET ME CONCENTRATE ON STUDYING THESE SCRIPTURES.



"IF THE HORSES ARE NOT KEPT IN CONTROL THE GOAL IS NOT REACHED."



SIMILARLY, THE MAN WHO CANNOT CONTROL THE SENSES WON'T REACH HIS GOAL.



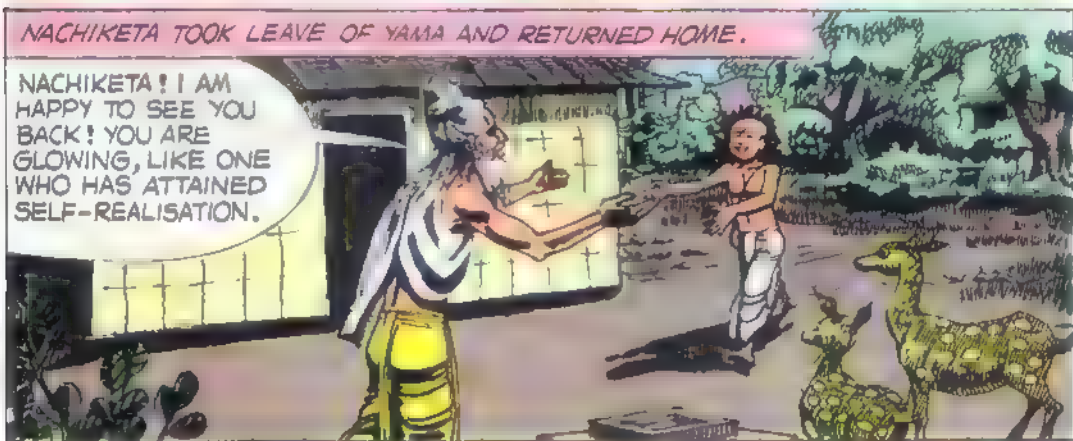
THUS YAMA EXPLAINED THE NATURE OF THE SELF.

THE SELF IS NEVER BORN, NOR DOES IT DIE... WHEN ALL DESIRES HAVE BEEN GIVEN UP, MAN BECOMES IMMORTAL AND EVEN IN THIS WORLD HE REALISES BRAHMAN.\*



NACHIKETA TOOK LEAVE OF YAMA AND RETURNED HOME.

NACHIKETA! I AM HAPPY TO SEE YOU BACK! YOU ARE GLOWING, LIKE ONE WHO HAS ATTAINED SELF-REALISATION.



AS NACHIKETA GREW OLDER, HIS RENOWN SPREAD. LATER, MANY SEEKERS OF TRUTH CAME TO HIS HERMITAGE FOR GUIDANCE.





# SATYAKAMA



GAUTAMA WAS ONE OF THE FOREMOST OF SAGES IN ANCIENT INDIA. MANY SEEKERS OF TRUTH FOUND THEIR WAY TO HIS FOREST-SCHOOL.

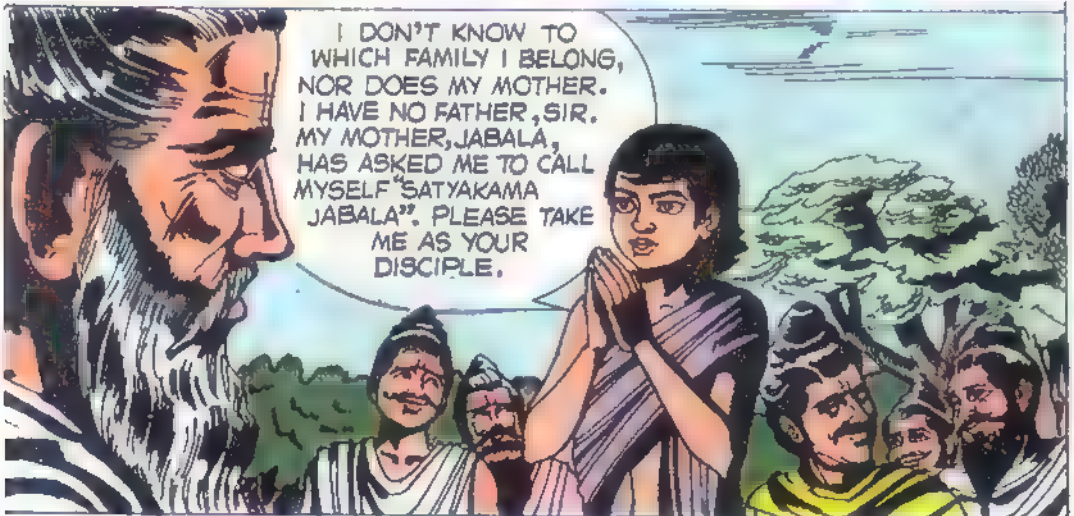
ONE DAY, A BOY OF EIGHT YEARS APPROACHED THE SAGE.

SALUTATIONS TO YOU, O MASTER. ACCEPT ME, SATYAKAMA, AS YOUR DISCIPLE.

TELL ME, CHILD, TO WHICH FAMILY DO YOU BELONG?



I DON'T KNOW TO WHICH FAMILY I BELONG, NOR DOES MY MOTHER. I HAVE NO FATHER, SIR. MY MOTHER, JABALA, HAS ASKED ME TO CALL MYSELF "SATYAKAMA JABALA". PLEASE TAKE ME AS YOUR DISCIPLE.



BEFORE THE SAGE COULD SPEAK, A SENIOR DISCIPLE INTERPOSED.

SIR, ONLY A BRAHMANA IS ENTITLED TO SACRED KNOWLEDGE. SATYAKAMA MAY NOT BE ONE.

HE WHO SPEAKS THE TRUTH WITHOUT FEAR OR HESITATION IS A BRAHMANA.

SATYAKAMA, ACCEPT YOU AS MY DISCIPLE. WHAT GOAL HAVE YOU SET FOR YOURSELF?

SIR, I WANT TO EXPERIENCE BRAHMAN—THE SUPREME REALITY.

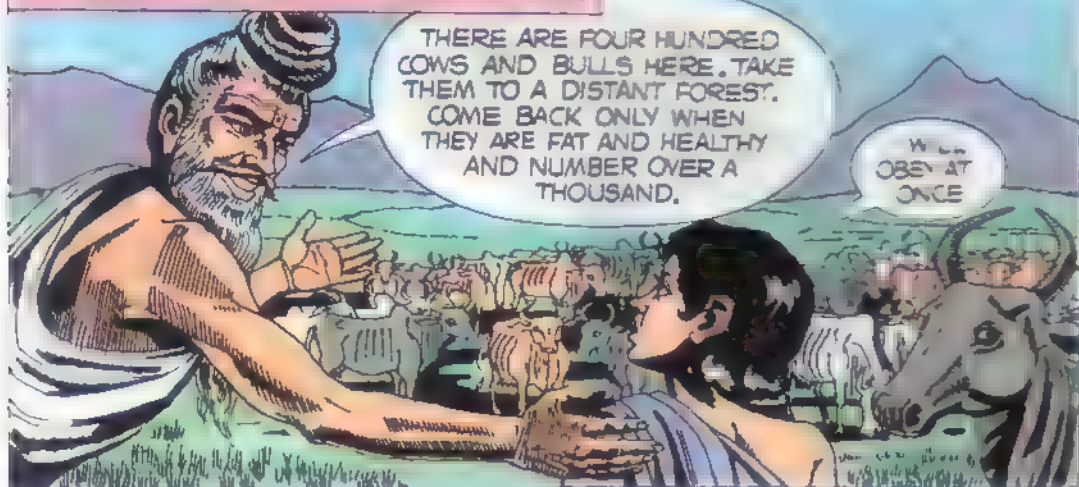
THE MASTER BECAME THOUGHTFUL.

THIS CHILD IS TRUTHFUL AND SINCERE. I WILL HELP HIM IN ACHIEVING HIS GOAL.

ALL RIGHT. COME WITH ME.



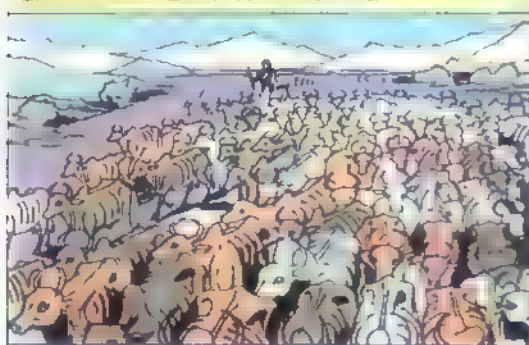
THE MASTER TOOK HIM TO THE CATTLE-PEN.



THERE ARE FOUR HUNDRED COWS AND BULLS HERE. TAKE THEM TO A DISTANT FOREST. COME BACK ONLY WHEN THEY ARE FAT AND HEALTHY AND NUMBER OVER A THOUSAND.

WILL OBEY AT ONCE

SATYAKAMA LEFT WITH THE CATTLE.

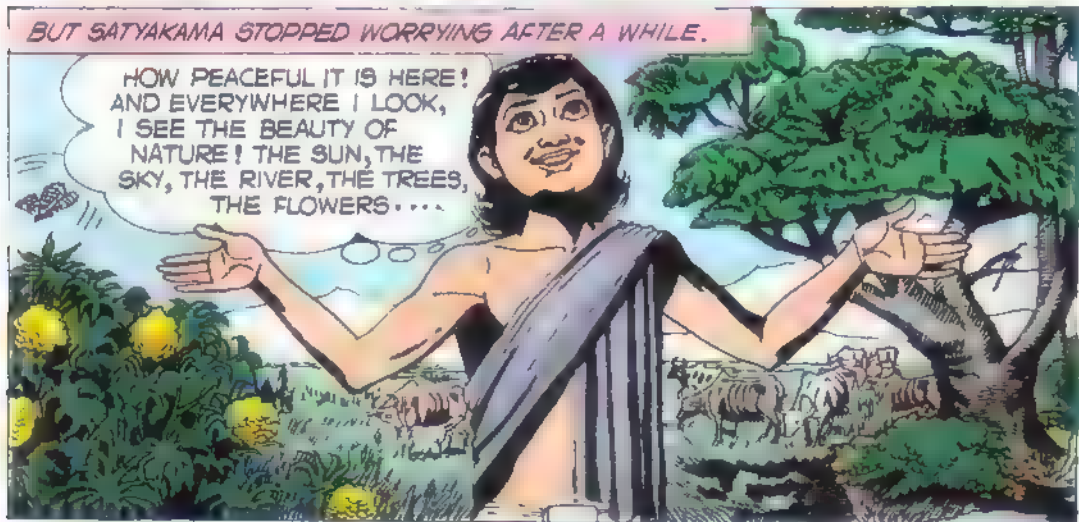


I TOLD THE GURU THAT I WANT TO EXPERIENCE BRAHMAN. I WONDER WHY HE SENT ME TO THE FOREST. IS BRAHMAN TO BE FOUND IN THE FOREST?



BUT SATYAKAMA STOPPED WORRYING AFTER A WHILE.

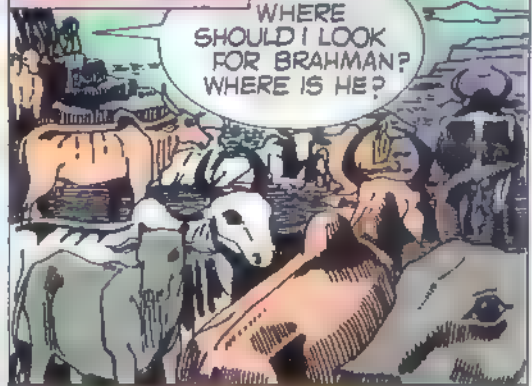
HOW PEACEFUL IT IS HERE! AND EVERYWHERE I LOOK, I SEE THE BEAUTY OF NATURE! THE SUN, THE SKY, THE RIVER, THE TREES, THE FLOWERS....



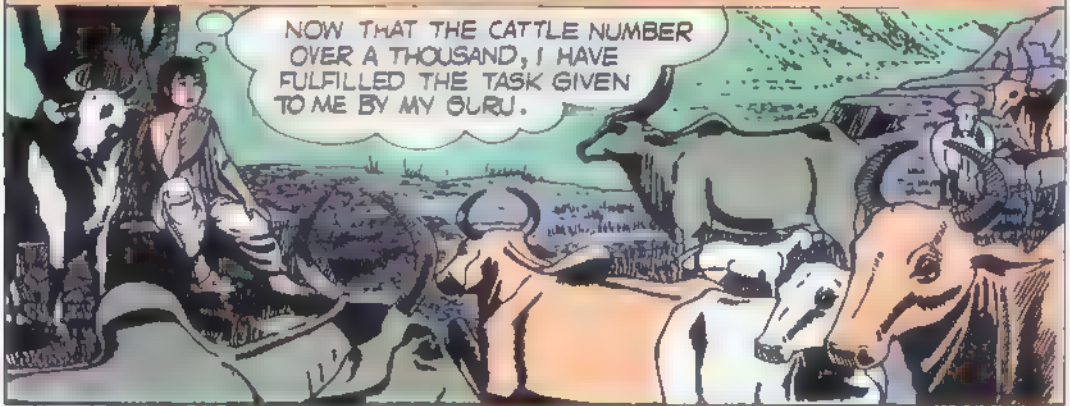
HE TOOK GOOD CARE OF THE CATTLE.



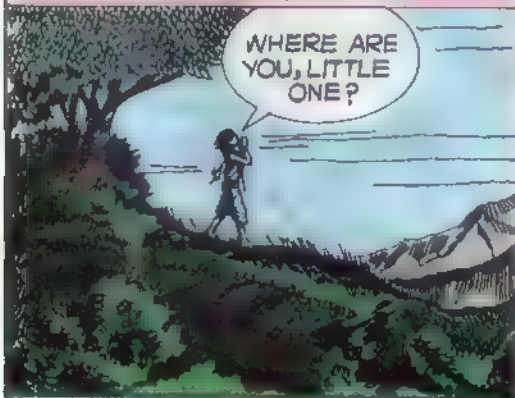
AT DUSK, WHILE THE CATTLE RESTED, HE MEDITATED.



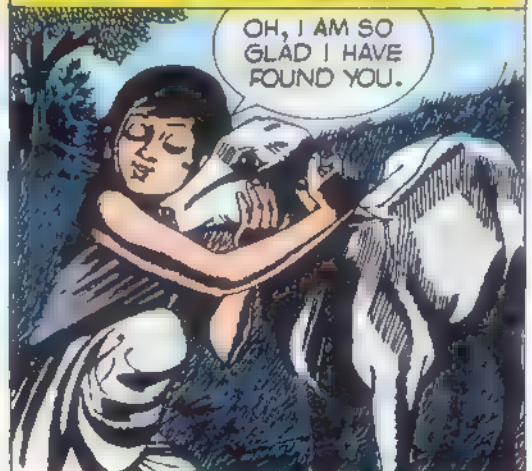
UNDER HIS CARE, THE COWS IMPROVED IN HEALTH AND INCREASED IN NUMBER.



BUT AS HE WAS PREPARING TO RETURN TO HIS GURU HE FOUND THAT ONE CALF WAS MISSING. HE SEARCHED EVERYWHERE—IN THE NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST.



FINALLY HE FOUND THE CALF —



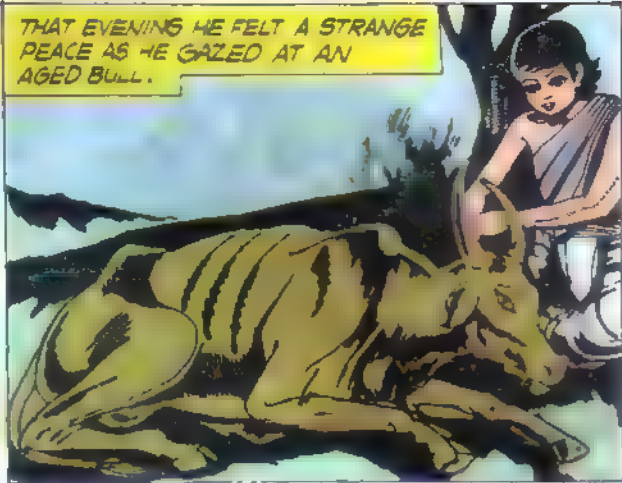


THEN HE BECAME THOUGHTFUL.

WILL I BE ABLE TO FIND  
BRAHMAN ALSO?

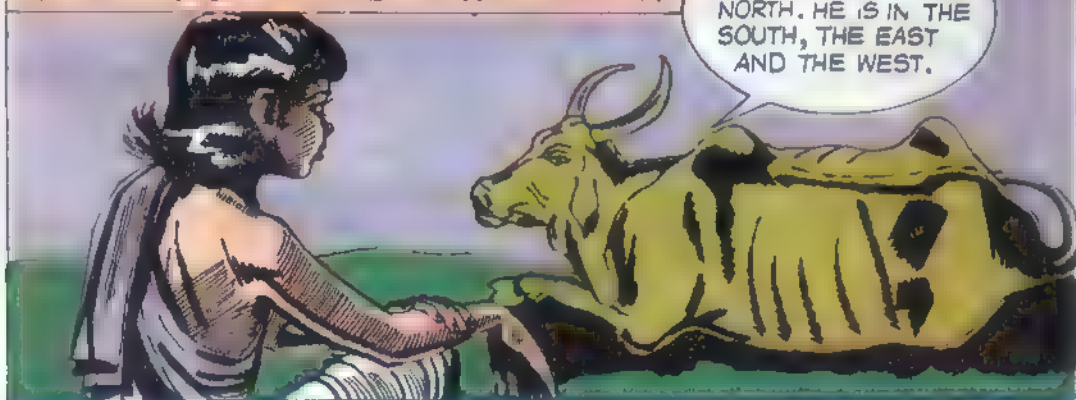


THAT EVENING HE FELT A STRANGE  
PEACE AS HE GAZED AT AN  
AGED BULL.



HE THEN THOUGHT HE HEARD THE BULL SPEAKING.

BRAHMAN IS IN THE  
NORTH. HE IS IN THE  
SOUTH, THE EAST  
AND THE WEST.



THAT'S TRUE! WHY SEARCH FOR  
HIM? HE IS PRESENT EVERY-  
WHERE.

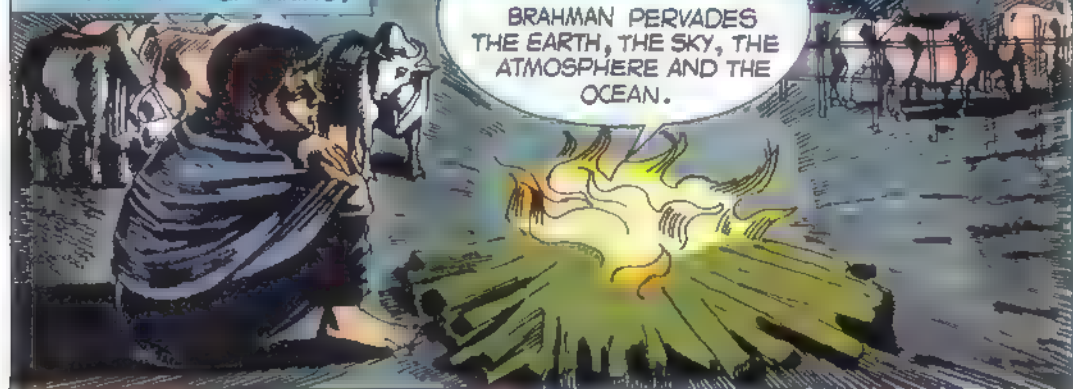


THAT DAY HE STARTED ON HIS RETURN JOURNEY,  
TAKING THE CATTLE WITH HIM.



AT DUSK HE BUILT A FIRE AND SAT BY IT. THEN HE FELT HE COULD HEAR THE FIRE SPEAKING.

BRAHMAN PERVADES  
THE EARTH, THE SKY, THE  
ATMOSPHERE AND THE  
OCEAN.

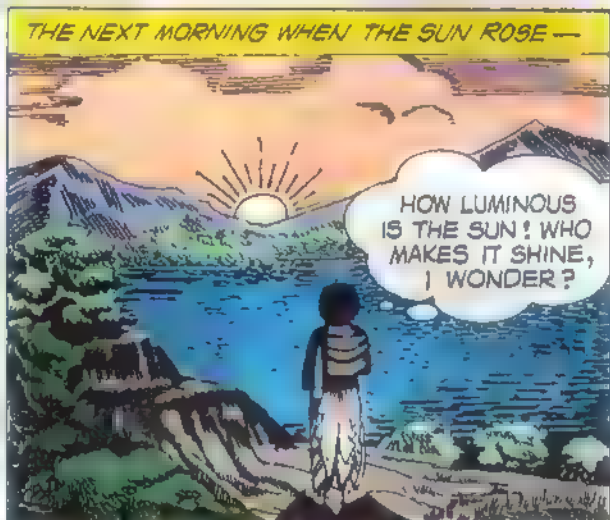


YES, BRAHMAN IS ENDLESS  
LIKE THE SKY.



THE NEXT MORNING WHEN THE SUN ROSE —

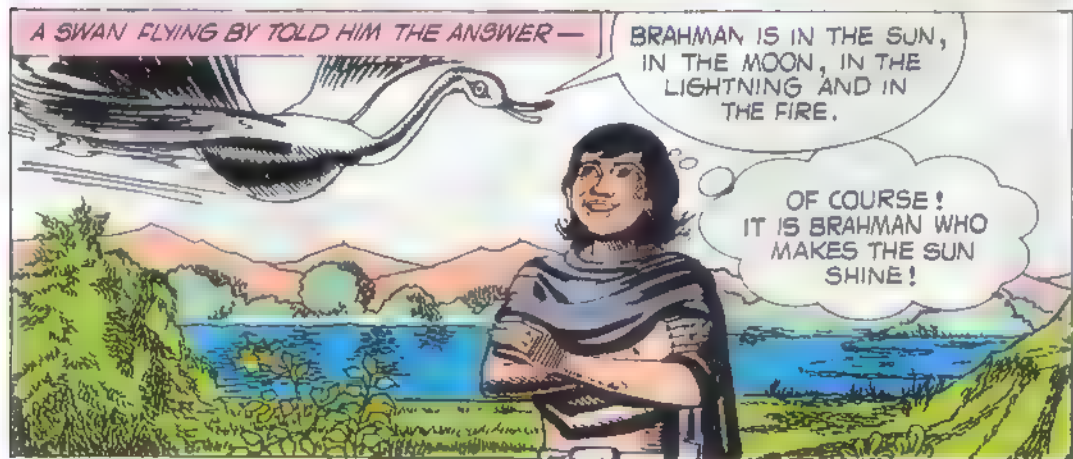
HOW LUMINOUS  
IS THE SUN! WHO  
MAKES IT SHINE,  
I WONDER?



A SWAN FLYING BY TOLD HIM THE ANSWER —

BRAHMAN IS IN THE SUN,  
IN THE MOON, IN THE  
LIGHTNING AND IN  
THE FIRE.

OF COURSE!  
IT IS BRAHMAN WHO  
MAKES THE SUN  
SHINE!





SATYAKAMA STOOD STILL AS NEW THOUGHTS FLOODED HIS MIND.

THEN WHO MAKES  
ME BREATHE?

WHO MAKES  
ME SEE, HEAR  
AND THINK?

AS A BIRD FLEW PAST HIM, HE RECEIVED HIS ANSWERS.

IT IS BRAHMAN  
IT IS BRAHMAN  
IT IS BRAHMAN

WHEN SATYAKAMA REACHED THE  
FOREST-SCHOOL —

SATYAKAMA,  
YOU GLOW LIKE ONE  
WHO HAS ATTAINED  
KNOWLEDGE OF  
BRAHMAN. HOW DID  
THIS HAPPEN?

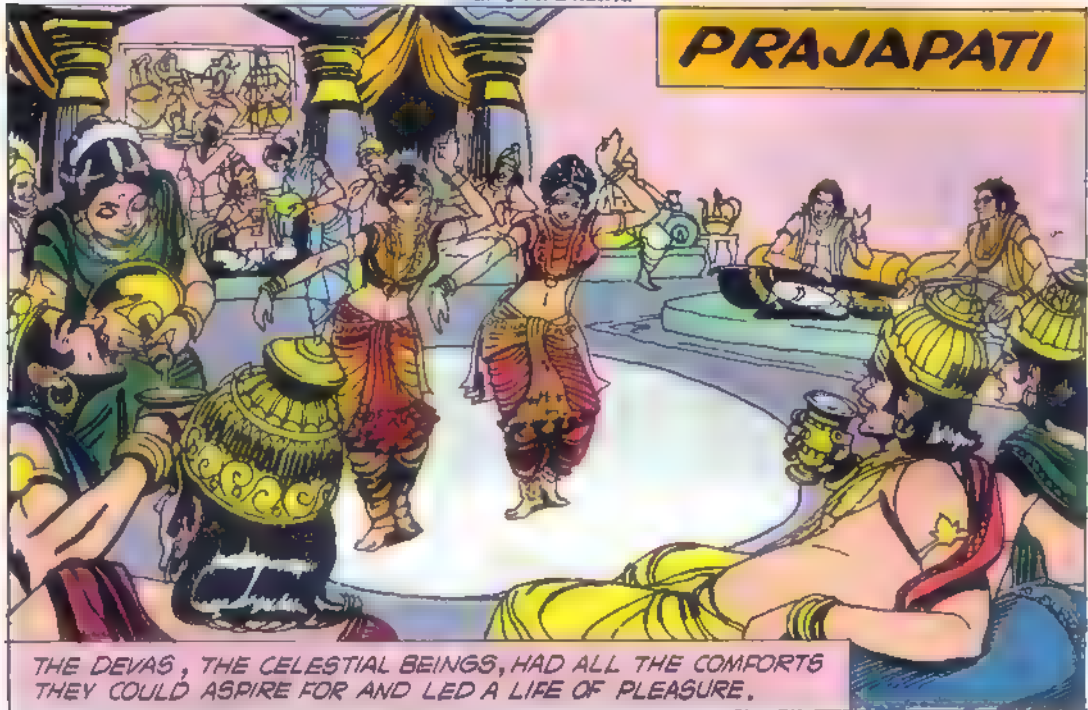
SATYAKAMA DESCRIBED HIS  
EXPERIENCE.

BUT KNOWLEDGE IMPARTED BY  
THE TEACHER HELPS THE MOST  
IN ATTAINING ONE'S GOAL.  
PLEASE INSTRUCT ME, SIR.

I WILL,  
MY SON.

GAUTAMA THEN IMPARTED THE  
SACRED KNOWLEDGE TO HIS DESERVING  
DISCIPLE, WHO LATER BECAME A GREAT SAGE.

# PRAJAPATI



THE DEVAS, THE CELESTIAL BEINGS, HAD ALL THE COMFORTS THEY COULD ASPIRE FOR AND LED A LIFE OF PLEASURE.

HERE IN HEAVEN WE ARE FREE FROM HUNGER, THIRST, OLD AGE AND DEATH. YET WHY AREN'T WE HAPPY?

IT'S TRUE. WE SEEM TO HAVE EVERYTHING, YET WE FEEL THE LACK OF SOMETHING.

LET US GO TO PRAJAPATI, OUR FATHER, AND SEEK HIS GUIDANCE.



THEY ALL LEFT FOR THE ABODE OF PRAJAPATI, THE FATHER OF ALL CREATION.



UNLIKE THEIR BROTHERS IN HEAVEN, THE MANAVAS—MEN ON EARTH—WERE LEADING A HARD LIFE.



A GOOD HARVEST!  
OUR FUTURE IS  
SECURE.



ON NO ACCOUNT WOULD THEY PART  
WITH WHAT THEY HAD GAINED.

GO AWAY,  
YOU WICKED BIRD,  
STEALING MY  
GRAIN!



YET, DESPITE ALL THE RICHES THEY HAD EARNED AND STORED AWAY, THEY, TOO,  
WERE FAR FROM HAPPY.

WE HAVE NO  
CONTENTMENT.

WHAT WE LACK  
IS PEACE OF  
MIND.

LET US  
APPROACH  
PRAJAPATI,  
OUR FATHER,  
FOR  
GUIDANCE.



THEY LEFT FOR THE ABODE OF PRAJAPATI.

THE ASURAS, THE DEMONS, INSPIRED FEAR AMONG BOTH THE MANAVAS AND THE DEVAS.

SPARE MY LIFE. SHOW MERCY.

MERCY? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? PREPARE TO DIE!



BUT THE ASURAS, TOO, WERE OVERCOME BY A FEELING OF DISSATISFACTION.

ALTHOUGH WE ARE POWERFUL AND FEARED BY ALL, WE ARE NOT HAPPY.



LET US GO TO PRAJAPATI, OUR FATHER, AND SEEK HIS GUIDANCE.

THE DEVAS, THE MANAVAS AND THE ASURAS PRAYED TO LORD PRAJAPATI.

O FATHER, TELL US WHAT WE SHOULD DO TO ACHIEVE CONTENTMENT AND PEACE.





PRAJAPATI, THE FATHER OF ALL BEINGS, UTTERED JUST ONE SYLLABLE.

DA....



EVERYONE WAS PERPLEXED.

DA? WHAT COULD THAT MEAN?



I THINK IT IS THE FIRST SYLLABLE OF A SECRET WORD WHICH WILL TELL US WHAT TO DO.

I THINK HE WANTS US TO DISCOVER THE WORD FOR OURSELVES.



THEY ALL LEFT FOR THEIR RESPECTIVE HOMES TO PONDER OVER THE SYLLABLE.

ON RETURNING TO THEIR CELESTIAL WORLD, THE DEVAS WERE ABOUT TO RESUME THEIR LIFE OF PLEASURE —

I'VE GOT IT! I KNOW WHAT "DA" MEANS!

TELL US WHAT IT MEANS.







ALL THE DEVAS PUT ASIDE THEIR PLEASURES. THEN THEY BEGAN TO PRACTISE SELF-CONTROL AND EXPERIENCED A SATISFACTION NEVER KNOWN BEFORE.





WHEN THE ASURAS WERE ABOUT TO RESUME THEIR ACTIVITIES —



TO REMIND PEOPLE OF THE THREE CARDINAL VIRTUES, SELF-CONTROL, CHARITY AND COMPASSION, IT THUNDERS NOW AND AGAIN —





# DOWN WITH THE REBELS!



Word reaches the Army Chief.

We must call Binaca-F. Killer COOH knows we're ill-equipped.

Binaca-F accepts the challenge.

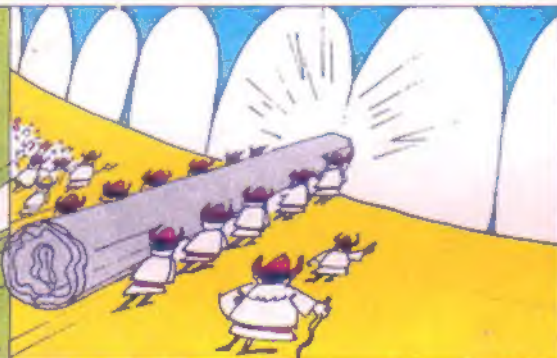
We'll prove Killer COOH wrong—with our new weapons Binaca Fluoride Toothpaste and Binaca Toothbrush.



With regular practice morning and night, the Toothsville army is soon battle-ready.



Monday, December XO, XNV7. Under the cover of night, Killer COOH attacks.



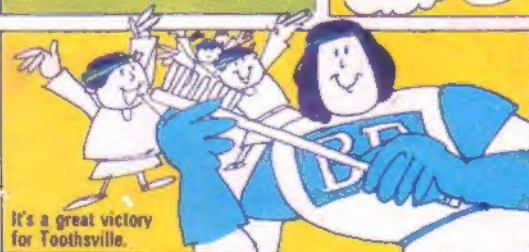
But Binaca-F and the Toothsville soldiers strike back.



Retreat men! We're out-powered!



Killer COOH's army is devastated by the combined efforts of Binaca-F and the Toothsville army.



It's a great victory for Toothsville.



It was better arms and training that did it! Thanks to Binaca Fluoride Toothpaste and Binaca Toothbrush.

\* Formula for Carbonyl acid group, which attacks tooth enamel and causes painful cavities.

Brush in extra toughness. Arrest tooth decay with Binaca Fluoride.